

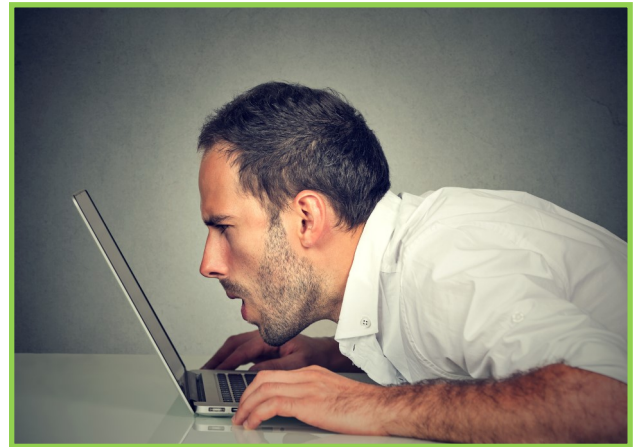
# WORK ERGONOMICS

June 2017

## WA State Employee Assistance Program

*According to the American Chiropractic Association, about 80% of the American population will experience a back problem at some point in their lives, and 31 million will experience low-back pain at any given time.*

Ergonomics is the practice of fitting the job to the worker, which may include avoiding tasks that can lead to an injury. This helps employers design jobs or workplaces to match workers' capabilities and limitations.



Ergonomists have found a number of jobs where there is a high occurrence of musculoskeletal disorders and have found some common underlying conditions.

According to Department of Enterprise Services Safety Manager Robyn Herring, here's the top five areas that employees could improve on ergonomically at a computer workstation.

1. **Feet not flat on floor or footrest** – the goal is to support the weight of your legs on your feet to reduce the pressure on the back of legs. You shouldn't work with your feet resting on the legs of the chair or tucked underneath you.
2. **Reaching for the mouse** – your mouse should be close to and on the same plane as the keyboard so you don't have to reach for the mouse.
3. **Leaning forward to view monitor** – your monitor should be an arm's length away. If you lean in to read the monitor, either enlarge the font on the screen or move the monitor closer.
4. **Micro-breaks** – you should change your position frequently. Get up to talk to a coworker instead of sending an email. Raise your desk to standing height and back to sitting one or more times an hour. Mouse with your opposite hand periodically. The goal is to engage a wide range of muscles throughout your workday.
5. **Adjust your chair and workstation to find what works best for you** – try out all the adjustments on your chair to learn what they do and find the position that works best for you.

If you are interested in learning more about ergonomic assessments, contact L&I at [ergonomics@Lni.wa.gov](mailto:ergonomics@Lni.wa.gov). The Department of Enterprise Services also conducts ergonomic assessments in Pierce, Lewis, Mason, and Thurston counties to local or state government entities including state agencies, school districts, and local governments. Please contact Robyn Herring [robyn.herring@des.wa.gov](mailto:robyn.herring@des.wa.gov) for more information on locations and fees.

DES has trainings available on workstation ergonomics in LMS. Check out their training on office ergonomics [here](#).

The most common causes of strains and sprains in Washington workplaces according to L&I are:

- **Slips, trips and falls**
- **Overexertion** – lifting, carrying, pushing, pulling, and other physical demands.
- **Posture or movement** – bending, reaching, twisting, crawling, repetitive motions.

To prevent strains, dislocations and muscle tears, make sure you lift properly. Check out these tips for lifting [here](#).

Watch this short episode of Dr. Ergo [here](#) that addresses proper lifting techniques. If you are interested in learning more about ergonomics awareness, check out this video from L&I [here](#).

This lifting calculator app can be used to quickly identify recommended weight limits for different lifting tasks: [OSHA Lifting calculator](#).

Always stretch before any physical activity



If you are interested in learning more on ergonomics and the services L&I has to offer to Washington State employers and employees, contact [ergonomics@Lni.wa.gov](mailto:ergonomics@Lni.wa.gov).

If you have an injury, seek treatment. Ask your primary care provider if they recommend an alternative treatment. Members in PEBB medical plans have coverage available for massage therapy, chiropractic, and acupuncture. To see what your medical plan covers, see the Health Care Authority's webpage [here](#).

By making ergonomics part of your routine at work and home, you can keep your body free of strain and pain.

Washington State Employee Assistance Program (EAP) helps employees and their family members resolve personal or work-related problems.

[www.eap.wa.gov](http://www.eap.wa.gov) Toll-free 1-877-313-4455